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# Separation-individuation, vulnerability to stress and psychological symptoms in late adolescents.

Audrey Ellen Tolman  
*University of Massachusetts Amherst*

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SEPARATION-INDIVIDUATION, VULNERABILITY TO STRESS  
AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SYMPTOMS IN LATE ADOLESCENTS

A Thesis Presented

by

AUDREY ELLEN TOLMAN

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

February 1992

Department of Psychology

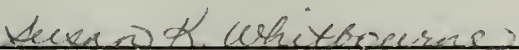
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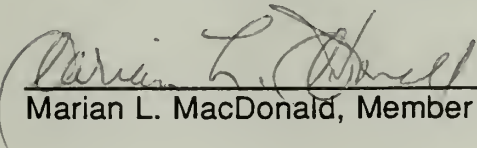
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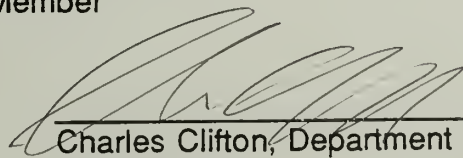
AUDREY ELLEN TOLMAN

Approved as to style and content by:

  
Susan K. Whitbourne, Chair

  
Marian L. MacDonald, Member

  
Paula Pietromonaco, Member

  
Charles Clifton, Department Head  
Psychology

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor, Sue Whitbourne, for her support and encouragement throughout the course of this project. I am particularly grateful to Sue for her help with the data analysis. I was fortunate to work with someone well versed in SPSSx who was, at the same time, available and willing to share her knowledge with me.

I thank the other members of my thesis committee, Marian MacDonald and Paula Pietromonaco, for their helpful suggestions during the initial phase of the project. I am grateful, as well, to the Psychology department for a grant that helped to defray the cost of the SCL-90 and other supplies.

I was very fortunate to have the help of three very responsible undergraduate research assistants during the data collection phase of the project. Lisa Brillon, Lori Issenberg, and Michele Somers independently carried out all aspects of data collection, from subject recruitment to data entry. I am indebted to them for their enthusiasm, time and hard work.

My parents have made it possible for me to get to this point in my life, and I thank them for their continued generosity, encouragement and pride. Finally, I would like to thank Rich Dienes, who has supported me in such important ways with his patience, sense of humor and respect for my work.

## ABSTRACT

### SEPARATION-INDIVIDUATION, VULNERABILITY TO STRESS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SYMPTOMS IN LATE ADOLESCENTS

FEBRUARY 1992

AUDREY ELLEN TOLMAN, B.A., HARVARD UNIVERSITY  
M.S., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS

Directed by: Professor Susan K. Whitbourne

Psychoanalytic and family systems theorists recognize that psychological separation from the family of origin is a primary task of late adolescence, and the successful completion of this task is considered by many to be a prerequisite for healthy adjustment. This study examines the relationship between dimensions of psychological separation from parents and the experience of stress in late adolescent college students. It was hypothesized that several different dimensions of dependence on parents would be associated with academic, family and social stress and that family stress in particular would be a strong predictor of psychological symptoms. The roles played by self-esteem and coping in the prediction of symptoms were explored, as were possible gender and age differences in dependence, stress and symptoms. Differences according to parents' marital status were also assessed. Two hundred and thirty-nine male and female undergraduates participated in the study by completing a series of questionnaires including the Psychological Separation Inventory, the College Adjustment Rating Scale, the Ways of Coping Checklist-Revised, and the Symptom Checklist-90-Revised. The results indicate that conflictual dependence on one or both parents is associated with stress in all three domains and is most strongly associated with family stress. Family stress emerged as an important predictor of symptoms for females only;

academic stress was the best predictor of symptoms in males. Significant gender differences emerged in virtually all variables studied, with females reporting more emotional dependence on parents, more academic and family stress, and more symptoms than males. There were few differences associated with age and parents' marital status. Clinical implications and suggestions for future research are discussed.

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## CHAPTER 1

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Separation-Individuation

Researchers and clinicians of diverse theoretical orientations recognize that separation from the family of origin is a primary task of late adolescence, and the successful completion of this task is considered by many to be a prerequisite for healthy adjustment. Psychoanalytic theorists conceptualize adolescent separation-individuation as an intrapsychic process of personality stabilization that parallels the process by which infants and toddlers come to experience themselves as unique and separate from their mothers. Family systems theorists conceptualize adolescent separation as a highlighted moment in the lifelong process of negotiating personal autonomy in the context of a larger family system. Presented below is an overview of both theoretical models and a review of the empirical literature on the relationship between separation-individuation and adjustment in late adolescence.

#### Psychoanalytic Model

The concept of separation-individuation originates in the work of Mahler and her colleagues (Mahler, Pine, and Bergman, 1975) who made extensive observations of the interaction of infants and toddlers with their mothers. Based on these observations, Mahler devised a conceptual scheme for describing the process by which the young child develops an ego, learning to differentiate self-experience from the perceptions and demands of others. According to this scheme, separation-individuation consists of four phases: 1. in the earliest phase of differentiation, infants break away from symbiotic oneness with their mothers and begin to be able to perceive themselves as separate entities; 2. in the practicing phase, infants experiment with their awareness of their

autonomous selves while remaining in close proximity with their mothers; 3. rapprochement occurs when toddlers' awareness of their separateness stimulates their need to regain closeness to their mothers. At this point, they demand their mothers' investment in their newfound autonomy; 4. finally, during the consolidation phase, toddlers begin to develop emotional object constancy so that they can ultimately internalize their mothers' image.

Blos (1967) proposed a second separation-individuation process in adolescence, when a "maturational forward surge" (p. 165) calls for the disengagement from the internalized object ties of infancy:

What is in infancy a 'hatching from the symbiotic membrane to become an individuated toddler,' becomes in adolescence the shedding of family dependencies, the loosening of infantile object ties in order to become a member of society at large, or simply, of the adult world (p. 163).

According to Blos (1967) both periods have in common a heightened vulnerability of personality organization, an urgency for changes in psychic structure, and the potential for psychopathology, should the normal course of the period be disrupted.

Josselson (1980) provides a more detailed description of adolescent separation-individuation, delineating the specific stages of ego development in adolescence that parallel those in infancy. During latency, children are realistically and emotionally dependent on their parents. They trust their parents' judgment above their own and believe in their parents' omnipotence. The parental ego is equivalent to the child's ego ideal. The instinctual demands of puberty "shatter the harmony of latency" (p. 194) by creating a threatening regressive pull that leads early adolescents to turn away from parental ego support. Adolescents seek to regain ego support in peers and "practice separateness" (p. 194) from their parents. When adolescents have enough of a



sense of autonomy to feel safe from the regressive pulls of childhood, they can allow themselves to experience their reliance on the parental ego. In this, the equivalent of the rapprochement phase of childhood, adolescents want their parents to serve as a home base to which they can return when in need. The eventual recognition of the limits of the usefulness of the parental ego is the final stage of the process, indicating a sharpening of boundaries and a feeling of selfhood and will. Josseison (1980) emphasizes that physical and emotional separation from parents does not necessary imply that intrapsychic separateness has been achieved. Complete withdrawal or physical separation is often a mask for an adolescent's incapacity to separate from internal objects.

Arnstein (1980) considers the role that the university plays in the adolescent separation-individuation process. He observes that the majority of students entering the university are still immersed in their families emotionally, geographically and/or financially. By the time of graduation, these same students will have achieved a certain degree of independence and will have become adults in society's view. "In doing so, the student's relation to his or her family of origin will inevitably change, and both student and family will have to adjust to this development" (Arnstein, 1980, p. 160). According to Arnstein (1980), the university can influence this process in a number of different ways: opening up a new world of experience to the student, exposing him or her to new ideas and value systems; exposing the student to the world of others who have had different experiences, thereby helping the student to see his or her family in better perspective and fostering his or her autonomy; strengthening identity in terms of career choice and sexual relationships; offering an opportunity for physical separation and autonomous living.

Arnstein (1980) believes that neither students nor parents anticipate the role that education inevitably plays in promoting students' differentiation from

their families. For students, this transitional process is difficult because independence and adult status are frightening at the same time that they are desired. From the family's standpoint, the process may also produce a fair amount of anxiety. Parents may be dealing with their own difficulties at the same time that their late adolescent children are seeking emancipation. Examples of such difficulties are intrapersonal or marital middlelife conflicts and reactivation of personal adolescent conflicts. In such situations, the dependent state of the child is perceived to be important to the psychological well-being of the parent. Arnstein (1980) notes that a wide discrepancy between the socioeconomic status of the family and the climate of the university can make adjustment particularly difficult for both students and families. Although he writes from a psychoanalytic perspective, it is evident that Arnstein (1980) is considering issues that are central to the family systems approach to the adolescent separation-individuation process.

### Family Systems Model

For family systems theorists, the tasks of adolescence are tasks for the family system as a whole, as, for example, stated by Preto (1989):

The adaptations in family structure and organization required to handle the tasks of adolescence are so basic that the family itself is transformed from a unit that protects and nurtures young children to one that is a preparation center for the adolescent's entrance into the world of adult responsibilities (Preto, 1989, p. 255).

Although the process is often confusing and disruptive, most families are eventually able to change rules and reorganize themselves to allow adolescents to have needed autonomy. It is when families are unable to negotiate this transformation because of existing or evolving dysfunctional

patterns that the maturing adolescent may develop psychological symptoms (Preto, 1989).

Sabatelli and Mazor (1985) call for an integration of the systemic approach with the psychoanalytic approach to the process of separation-individuation. They recognize the importance of the individual's successful completion of the individuation process for healthy adjustment but criticize the psychoanalytic model for its failure to consider the role of the family system in facilitating (or hindering) the process. By stressing intrapsychic processes, the psychoanalytic model "suggests that all family systems operate as a 'constant' in the individuation-identity formation processes" (Sabateilli & Mazor, 1985, p. 625).

Sabatelli and Mazor (1985) point out the crucial role that the family system inevitably plays in the adolescent individuation process. They focus on the concept of differentiation, which they define as a "property of a system that encourages a pattern of family cohesion and adaptability" (p. 621). The level of differentiation of a family is thought to have an impact on how personal development proceeds within the system and, in turn, how the system adapts to an individual's development. The process of individuation and the family's level of differentiation are linearly related: the well differentiated family is flexible and adapts well to the changing autonomy needs of individual family members. In contrast, the poorly differentiated family, which is characterized by "fusion" or "stuck togetherness" (p. 621), resists change of all kinds and functions to block individual efforts at generating autonomy. According to Sabatelli and Mazor (1985) individuals attempting to separate from such families may become highly reactive emotionally to stress situations and thereby remain emotionally tied to the family, even if they physically leave home.

## Empirical Literature

Most of the literature on adolescent separation-individuation is theoretical in nature. Over the past decade, however, researchers have made efforts to conceptualize the process empirically, giving rise to a small but growing literature on the relationship between separation and variables such as adjustment (Hoffman, 1984; Moore, 1987; Hoffman and Weiss, 1987; Lapsley, Rice and Shadid, 1989) and identity formation (Allison and Sabatelli, 1986).

Moore (1987) used an inductive, empirical approach to explore the ways in which college students define separation from parents. He found that students construe separation to be composed of the following distinct components: self-governance, economic independence, emotional detachment, separate residence, disengagement, school affiliation, and starting a family. In addition, he found that the salience of certain of these components for individuals is predictive of psychological well-being. Specifically, those who defined separation as self-governance reported higher levels of well-being, suggesting that greater responsibility and movement toward adulthood are positive steps in separation from parents. On the other hand, those who defined separation as emotional detachment reported lower levels of well-being, suggesting that difficulties maintaining ties with the family during separation leave the individual vulnerable to distress. Although Moore (1987) succeeds in identifying concrete components of the meaning of separation for late adolescents, his focus is essentially cognitive, leaving open questions about the affective and behavioral aspects of the separation process.

Hoffman (1984) has attempted to conceptualize both the affective and behavioral aspects of separation-individuation in a self-report inventory called the Psychological Separation Inventory (PSI). The scales of the PSI are derived theoretically from Mahler et. al.'s (1975) description of the first phase of



separation-individuation. In Hoffman's model, efforts by the infant to act independently are reflected in adolescence as the ability to manage one's personal affairs without the help of parents. This is "Functional Independence." The infant's differentiation between mental representations of self and other are reflected in adolescence in a difference of values, beliefs, and attitudes between the adolescent and his or her parents ("Attitudinal Independence"). Emotional dependence on the mother is a complex phenomenon which may include positive feelings of closeness as well as negative feelings of over-closeness and conflict. "Emotional Independence" is freedom from excessive need for approval, closeness, and emotional support from parents. "Conflictual Independence" is freedom from excessive guilt, anxiety, responsibility, and resentment in relation to parents.

Hoffman (1984) elects to distinguish between separation from mother and separation from father. Research has supported the importance of evaluating separation from each parent rather than from the parental unit. Lasser and Snarey (1989) describe the significance of the mother-father-daughter triangle for the ego development of the adolescent girl. They suggest that identification with the father can play an important role in facilitating the adolescent girl's separation from her mother.

The development of the PSI has paved the way for research on the relationship between separation-individuation and adjustment in late adolescent college students (Hoffman, 1984; Hoffman and Weiss, 1987; Lopez, Campbell, and Watkins, 1988; Lapsley et al., 1989). In general, results indicate that conflictual and emotional dependence on parents is associated with poorer personal adjustment in both males and females, although the relationship is more pervasive for females. Lapsley et al. (1989) also explored differences between freshmen and upperclassmen. They found more dependence and

poorer adjustment in freshmen but conclude that upperclassmen are by no means immune to separation and adjustment difficulties. Finally, researchers have begun to explore the relationships between dynamics within the family system, separation-individuation, and various measures of adjustment (Anderson and Fleming, 1986; Hoffman and Weiss, 1987). In general, these studies suggest that dysfunctional family patterns are associated with greater dependence and poorer adjustment in students. These results should be evaluated with caution, however, since assessments of family functioning in these studies were based on students' self-reports.

### Gender Differences in Separation

Work on women's development (Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1982) has emphasized the salience of relationship and connection in the experience of women. Therefore, one might expect to find important differences in the experience of separation-individuation for male and female adolescents. In fact, some feminist critics would argue that separation-individuation is an inappropriate paradigm for describing the developmental tasks of women. One such critic suggests that a better description of this task for women might be "renegotiation of connection" (D. Tolman, personal communication, 1990). Lapsley et al. (1989) report that females in their study were significantly more dependent on parents than were males. However, they caution against interpreting these findings to suggest developmental deficiencies in women, and they point out that the greater dependency in women was not associated with adjustment difficulties. Moore (1987), on the other hand, found that males in particular seem to have difficulty maintaining positive family ties during the separation process which leaves them vulnerable to adjustment difficulties. These divergent findings, the general paucity of research on the topic, and

questions concerning gender bias indicate that the issue deserves further exploration.

### Separation-Individuation and Vulnerability to Stress

Sabatelli and Mazor (1985) suggest that adolescents whose efforts at generating autonomy are blocked by the family system "may become highly emotionally reactive to stress situations. This reactivity is manifested by the intellectual objectivity of the individual being repeatedly superseded by emotional reactivity" (p. 629). Although researchers have examined the relationship between the separation process and various measures of personal adjustment, none have explored the role that the separation process may play in creating a vulnerability to stress, particularly stress from the family, in late adolescents. Such an approach has the potential to elucidate at least one process by which difficulties in the separation process lead to adjustment problems in late adolescents. Stress is a concept that is readily accessible to most people and has particular salience for college students who face a variety of challenges in the various domains of their lives (Archer and Lamnin, 1985). Understanding the relationship between the process of separation-individuation and psychological stress may prove useful in developing effective interventions for symptomatic college students.

### Stress

Behavioral scientists have been studying the nature and effects of psychological stress for many decades and in the process have produced a large and rapidly expanding literature on the topic. Stress has traditionally been operationalized as a collection of certain types of life events that are thought to tax the resources of the individual and thereby produce physiological and/or psychological distress (eg. Holmes and Rahe, 1967). Pearlin (1983) considers the importance of "role strains," the conflicts and problems that

people encounter as they engage in normal social roles, as potential precursors to stress. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) advocate an approach that places emphasis on individual differences in the experience of stress. They define stress as a process involving individuals' cognitive appraisals of situations in relation to their available resources rather than as the accumulation of life events. Presented below is an overview of each of these approaches, with a focus on issues relevant to the developmental tasks of late adolescents.

### Life Event Stress

The large-scale study of life event stress began with the work of Holmes and Rahe (1967) who developed the first life events inventories, the most influential of which is the Social Readjustment Rating Scale (SRRS). Based on judges' ratings, each event on the SRRS was assigned a standardized life change unit, a measure of the amount of readjustment required by the event. Scores on the SRRS have been associated with both physical and psychological distress, but the strength of these relationships is consistently low to moderate at best (Thoits, 1983). Since Holmes and Rahe (1967), researchers have refined the definition and measurement of stressful life events in efforts to improve the strength of these relationships. Thoits (1983) offers a thorough review of the dimensions of life events on which researchers have focused their attention. A brief summary of this review follows.

Holmes and Rahe (1967) defined stress as change associated with all kinds of life events, including presumably positive ones, like marriage or the birth of a child. However, studies since that time have shown that the sum of undesirable events is more strongly associated with various measures of psychological distress than is the total number of events experienced (Sarason, Johnson, and Siegel, 1978). Undesirability, not change, appears to be the crucial dimension. Researchers have also directed their attention to the issue of



controllability of events (eg. Dohrenwend, 1973). In general, uncontrollable events are more strongly associated with depression than are controllable events, a finding which is consistent with theories of helplessness. When the dependent variable is not depression specifically, the findings are inconsistent. Thoits (1983) points out that controllability likely interacts with desirability, but this interaction has not been adequately addressed by the research. Other potentially important, but inadequately researched, dimensions of life events include: expected versus unexpected events; additive, curvilinear, and interactive effects of events; and time clustering of events.

One final dimension of life events seems particularly relevant to the present study. This is the dimension of empirically derived factors that tap major domains of life activities. Thoits' (1983) review of the limited literature reveals little evidence for the predictive validity of this dimension. However, she concludes that domains of life activity comprise an important dimension of events, one that is in need of further research. For the purposes of the present study, it would seem important to assess separately life events from different domains of life. Because of the developmental tasks that they face, late adolescents may be particularly vulnerable to stress associated with family events.

A small amount of research has addressed the significance of stressful family events for adolescent (usually college) populations. Descriptive studies have identified the family as an important source of stress for late adolescent college students (Archer and Lamnin, 1985; Anderson and Yuenger, 1987). Research on the relationship between family stress and mental health has been sparse and inconclusive. Siddique and D'arcy (1984) found a strong relationship between family stress and mental health in young adolescents. However, their measure was based on global ratings of satisfaction in different

areas of life, rather than on a more standard life events measure. Using a life events measure, Windle (1987) found a relatively low correlation between number of stressful family events and general mental health in late adolescent females. However, he cautions the reader about drawing conclusions based on this finding in light of low reliability estimates for the different stress dimensions and the fact that the number of items sampled by the measure is relatively small (the family dimension includes only seven items). Windle (1987) taps into a larger methodological issue when he questions the utility of the accumulation of life events as an index of stress. Citing Lazarus and Folkman (1984), he concludes that future studies would benefit from the inclusion of subjects' appraisals of the stressfulness of events to address questions concerning individual differences in the perception of stress.

### Role Strain

"Role strain" (Pearlin, 1983) is another paradigm within the stress literature that seems relevant to the experience of late adolescents. According to Pearlin (1983) role strains are:

the hardships, challenges, and conflicts or other problems that people come to experience as they engage in normal social roles. These strains, in turn, stand as potentially powerful antecedents of stress and its emotional and physical manifestations (p. 8).

Pearlin (1983) proposes that an individual's experience of role strain may also arise indirectly, through the difficulties that other people encounter, since roles are embedded in "role sets, that is, clusters of related roles within which interaction between the role-occupants takes place" (p. 8).

Pearlin (1983) delineates six different types of role strain. Role tasks are problems that exist between the individual and the nature of the tasks he or she is expected to perform (such as in a work or school setting). Interpersonal

conflicts within role sets comprise a second category of role strains. These include: Marital strains; relationships between parents and children; strains on the entire family system; and strains related to one's occupation, such as a difficulty with a colleague or boss. Within this category Pearlin (1983) considers the impact that children have on their parents. However, he does not consider the impact that parents or the family as a whole may have on the developing child.

A third category of role strain is that of multiple roles and interpersonal conflict. In this case, the expectations and demands of one role may conflict with those of another, leaving the individual "in a state of confusion and cross-pressures" (Pearlin, 1983, p. 16). Role conflict is most pronounced when the roles are of similar importance or are "equally unrelinquishable" (p. 18). This category illustrates well the dilemma faced by many late adolescents, whose roles as "family member" or "child" will inevitably conflict with their new role as "autonomous young adult". Role captivity refers to one's sense of being bound to one role while wishing to play another. Again, this category may be relevant for late adolescents who are somehow being held back from experiencing the degree of autonomy they desire, as in the case of a college student who seeks independence from his or her family but remains financially dependent on them.

Loss and gain of roles comprises another important category of role strain. Pearlin (1983) points out that this type of strain is particularly apparent in early adulthood, during which time individuals gain new roles by entering occupations and establishing families of their own. Finally, role restructuring refers to the entrance into and the exit from role sets or transitions within role sets. In these situations, individuals must overcome earlier modes of relating and behaving in order to arrive at new, more appropriate ones. For late adolescents, moving out of the family home and going away to college can help

to facilitate the restructuring of family roles that should occur during this period. However, one is reminded that geographical separation in and of itself does not guarantee an easy or successful separation experience for the late adolescent and his or her family (Josselson, 1980; Sabatelli and Mazor, 1985).

According to Pearlin (1983), role strains, although rarely traumatic, are often more stress-producing than are major life events. He explains this apparently paradoxical finding in terms of the persistence of role strains and their impact on self-esteem. Role strains occur as processes that are often of long duration, and as such they may remind people of their incapacity to change unwanted conditions. This sense of helplessness threatens mastery and self-esteem. Role strains "diminish crucial aspects of the self, and when this occurs. . . the individual becomes more vulnerable to stress" (Pearlin, 1983, p. 27). Pearlin (1983) reports that people often cope with role strain by demeaning the importance of roles that cause distress and focusing on roles that are more rewarding. He concludes that stress researchers should move away from an emphasis on eventful change, which may, in fact, involve a change in roles.

### Stress and Coping Processes

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) propose a different way of thinking about psychological stress and its relation to physical and mental health. They define stress as a complex cognitive process, rather than as a direct consequence of discrete environmental events. Within their framework, stress is defined as "a particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being" (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984, p. 19). Appraisal is an evaluation process that determines why and to what extent a particular person-environment transaction is stressful. Coping is a crucial



component of this framework and is defined as "constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person" (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984, p. 141). The authors distinguish between coping that is directed toward regulating one's emotional response to the problem (emotion-focused coping) and coping that is directed at managing or altering the problem (problem-focused coping).

Research based on this cognitive framework has focused on appraisal and coping processes as predictors of somatic and psychological health (Folkman, Lazarus, Gruen, and DeLongis, 1986; Folkman and Lazarus, 1986; Folkman, Lazarus, Pimley, and Novacek, 1987). In general, this research indicates that there are wide individual differences in appraisal and coping processes which contribute to differences in the experience of psychological stress and somatic and psychological symptomatology. Although Lazarus' and Folkman's (1984) framework deemphasizes the role of objective life events, they and their colleagues have also been interested in exploring the role that "hassles," or daily stressful events (as opposed to major life events) might play in predicting somatic and psychological health (DeLongis, Coyne, Dakof, Folkman, and Lazarus, 1982; Gruen, Folkman, and Lazarus, 1988).

Of particular relevance to the present study is research that has focused on "centrality" in the meaning of daily hassles (Gruen, Folkman, and Lazarus, 1988). The authors define "central hassles" as those daily events that reflect important ongoing themes or problems in a person's life. They propose that central hassles should be important in predicting health outcomes for three reasons: 1. because of the psychological salience of central hassles, the individual may continue to be preoccupied with them after the actual encounter is over; 2. central hassles are more closely related to important patterns of

goals, beliefs, and commitments and may therefore generate more distress in the individual; and 3. central hassles may recur more frequently, as the individual's belief systems, coping deficits or other "personal agendas" (Gruen et. al., 1988, p. 744), may force them into similar situations over and over again. The results of the study indicate that centrality is an important dimension of hassles, one with predictive value over and above the dimensions of frequency and severity. The authors conclude that research on stress must identify what is central for each person.

In their consideration of centrality as an important dimension of daily hassles, Gruen et. al. (1988) discuss the concept of "psychological vulnerability". They propose that hassles and psychological symptoms may have a third variable in common, a general psychological vulnerability. Psychological vulnerability refers to factors that result in a greater risk of experiencing stress, regardless of coping or its associated outcomes. They suggest that vulnerability can be influenced by two different variables: Environmental sources, such as economic or social factors; and "person sources" (Gruen et. al., 1988, p. 759), such as values and beliefs about oneself and one's relation to the world, neurotic conflicts, and coping ineptitudes. They believe that psychological vulnerability includes but does not overlap with psychopathology.

One could hypothesize that late adolescence represents a period of heightened psychological vulnerability for those individuals who are having difficulty negotiating their developmental tasks of achieving autonomy from their families of origin and establishing identities of their own. Such individuals may be at greater risk of experiencing stress (and associated symptoms), particularly stress in relation to family events or hassles.

## Gender Differences in Perceptions of Stress

Few researchers have addressed the role of gender differences in the experience of stress. Sowa and Lustman (1984) assessed gender differences in the rating of stressful events, depression, and cognitive distortion. They used a measure of life change identical to the SRRS (Holmes and Rahe, 1967) with additional measures reflecting respondents' perceptions of experienced events. They found that men reported more stressful life change than women. However, women perceived events to be more stressful than did men. They also found that women had higher depression ratings but that men exhibited greater distortion in cognitive content. They propose that cognitive distortion may insulate men from depressive moods and suggest that research on sex differences in coping may be helpful in clarifying the relationships among gender, stress, and depression.

Siddique and D'Arcy (1984) assessed sex differences in adolescents' perceptions of stress in the areas of family, school, and peer groups. They found that females were more susceptible to family and peer group stress and scored higher on a measure of psychological symptomatology than did males. They discuss this finding in terms of differential structural conditions which place females at a disadvantage in society. The choice of roles is unclear for adolescent girls, who may be left with a sense that they lack control over their aspirations and behavior. They also cite female adolescents' greater social and psychological dependency on families as a possible factor in their heightened sensitivity to family and peer stress.

Although the findings are limited, the little available research suggests that one should assess gender differences when exploring individuals' perceptions of stress, their experience of symptomatology, and their use of coping strategies. This will be especially important in the present study, since

separation-individuation, also a key variable, may be characterized by significant gender differences as well.

### The Present Study

The present study explores the relationships among separation-individuation, stress, and psychological symptoms in late adolescent college students. Separation-individuation is operationalized as attitudinal, conflictual, emotional, and functional independence from parents using Hoffman's (1984) Psychological Separation Inventory. Stress is defined as individuals' perceptions of the stressfulness of a variety of recently experienced events and hassles occurring in three important domains of college life (academic, family, and social) . In addition to the three primary variables, the study includes an exploration of coping strategies used by individuals in response to a recent stressful family event or situation. Self-esteem is included as an exploratory variable. The study also assesses gender and age differences in separation-individuation, stress, use of coping strategies, and the experience of psychological symptoms.

Previous studies of separation-individuation (Hoffman, 1984; Hoffman and Weiss, 1987; Lapsley et. al.,1989) have focused solely on late adolescents from intact families because of concerns about possible confounds associated with more complicated divorced or otherwise non-intact families. Given the reality of rising divorce rates and changing conceptions of family "normality" in this country (Carter and McGoldrick, 1989), the generalizability of findings from such studies remains in question, creating a need for research that addresses the experience of "the other half". According to Peck and Manocherian (1989), "Divorce is a major disruption in the family life-cycling process, adding complexity to whatever developmental tasks the family is experiencing in its present phase" (p. 335). In light of these facts and the gap in the existing



literature, the present study includes individuals from non-intact families (divorced, separated, parent deceased, parent(s) remarried), thereby providing an opportunity to assess the role of family structure in the separation-individuation process as well as in the experience of stress and psychological symptoms.

### Hypotheses

Specific hypotheses of the study are:

1. Psychological dependence (particularly conflictual and emotional dependence) on one or both parents is associated with stress (particularly family stress) and psychological symptoms in late adolescents.
2. Family stress is more predictive of psychological symptoms in late adolescents than is academic stress, social stress or self-esteem.
3. Use of certain coping strategies in relation to a family stressor is associated with psychological symptoms. Use of coping strategies may vary according to age and gender.
4. Women are more dependent on parents than are men. Women may also report higher levels of stress (particularly family and social stress) and more psychological symptoms than men.
5. Freshmen are more dependent on parents than are upperclassmen. Freshmen may report higher levels of stress and more psychological symptoms than upperclassmen.
6. Individuals from non-intact families have different patterns of dependence on parents than do individuals from intact families. For example, those from divorced families may be more dependent on their custodial parent and less dependent on their non-custodial parent. Individuals from non-intact families may report higher levels of family stress than individuals from intact families.

## CHAPTER 2

### METHOD

#### Subjects

Subjects were recruited in undergraduate psychology classes at the University of Massachusetts and received extra credit for their participation in the "College Life Experiences Study." Male and female freshmen and juniors who lived away from their families of origin and spoke English as their first language were invited to participate in the study. The purpose of the selective recruitment of freshmen and juniors was to provide an opportunity to examine differences between entering and more advanced students on several different measures. Seniors were excluded because it was thought that they may be facing different issues (graduation, career decisions) that might influence their responses and make interpretation of findings difficult. Although it would be interesting to examine separation and stress processes of students from different cultures and/or those who continue to live at home with their families, such explorations were beyond the scope of the present study.

A total of two hundred and thirty-nine subjects, one hundred and sixty-nine females and seventy males, participated in the study. Although equal numbers of males and females were sought, more women signed up to participate. This disparity likely reflects the composition of psychology classes, which generally attract more women than men. Eighty-two percent of subjects were white, three percent were black, three percent were Asian, and two percent were Hispanic. Information about race was missing for nine percent of subjects. No attempt was made to actively recruit subjects from intact or non-intact families. Rather, the goal was to gather a naturally occurring sample of students from different family backgrounds.

Table 1 contains a description of the sample according to parents' marital status and "custodial parent" (the parent(s) with whom the student has lived). Sixty-six percent of females and fifty-seven percent of males came from intact families. Seventy-five percent of the remaining subjects came from families in which the parents had divorced; the remaining twenty-five percent came from families in which the parents had separated or one parent had died. Of those subjects from non-intact families, most (seventy-eight percent) lived with their mother or mother and stepfather. Ninety-six percent of subjects reported their biological mother to be the primary maternal figure in their lives. Eighty-nine percent of subjects reported their biological father to be the primary paternal figure in their lives. Others reported their stepfather or grandfather to be their primary paternal figure (information was missing for six percent of subjects).

### Instruments

#### Psychological Separation Inventory

Hoffman defines psychological separation in late adolescents as a multidimensional construct based on psychoanalytic and structural family relations theory. The dimensions of this construct include: functional independence, the ability to manage and direct one's practical and personal affairs without the aid of parents; attitudinal independence, the image of oneself as unique and having one's own beliefs, values, and opinions; emotional independence, freedom from excessive need for approval, closeness, and emotional support from parents; conflictual independence, freedom from excessive guilt, anxiety, and resentment in relationships with parents. These dimensions provide the basis for the four scales that comprise the PSI.

Items for the functional, emotional, and conflictual independence scales of the PSI were generated from an earlier scale of emancipation from parents and from clinical experience of the author and his colleagues. Items for the

attitudinal independence scale were generated from a review of attitudinal questionnaires, newspapers, and magazines. Subjects rate items separately for mother and father on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 = not at all true of me to 4 = very true of me. Scores for the PSI are computed by adding ratings for each scale and subtracting this sum from the total number possible for each scale (higher scores reflect greater independence). In the present study, subjects were instructed to complete the items based on their relationships with their primary maternal and paternal figures, whether or not these were their biological parents.

Internal consistency reliability estimates (chronbach alpha) for the four scales range from .84 to .92. Test-retest reliability estimates over a period of 2-3 weeks range from .49 - .94 (median = .83) for males and .83 - .96 (median = .83) for females. Hoffman (1984) assessed the construct validity of the PSI through correlations with the Personal Adjustment scale of the Adjective Checklist and two global questions concerning academic adjustment and quality of love relationships. He found that for males and females, greater emotional independence from both parents is related to better academic adjustment and greater conflictual independence from parents is related to better adjustment in love relationships. He also found that attitudinal independence was negatively correlated with personal adjustment in both males and females. He interprets this last finding as suggesting that attitudinal similarity may facilitate a better relationship with parents that may lead to better adjustment. In a later study using the PSI (Hoffman and Weiss, 1987), the authors found that the dimensions of emotional and conflictual independence were of particular importance for psychological health.



### College Adjustment Rating Scale

The CARS (Zitzow, 1984) is a measure of college students' self-assessment of stress within the academic, social, personal, and family-home environments. It is designed to yield a summary of life events experienced in the past year, an individualized stress rating for each event, a stress summary for each environment, and a total stress score. The stress ratings are based on students' appraisals of the intensity of stress associated with each event. The CARS was selected as the stress measure for this study because it is the most comprehensive list of late adolescent life events (and family events in particular) available.

The CARS consists of 100 items, 25 per environment. Items were selected from existing life event scales and relevant literature to represent the experience of college students. The items include acute negative events, such as "Death of brother or sister," and "Giving a class presentation," as well as chronic negative situations, such as "Conflicts between own goals, values, and morals, and those of parents," and "Peer pressure regarding sex."

Zitzow (1984) does not explicitly define the four scales that comprise the CARS, although the Academic, Social, and Family Stress scales are generally self-explanatory. This is not true of the Personal Stress scale, which contains a seemingly heterogeneous set of items. It is difficult to determine what the author means by "personal stress," but it is apparent that many of these items describe symptoms of psychological disorders that overlap directly with items from the SCL-90. Table 2 contains a list of eleven items from the Personal Stress scale of the CARS and corresponding items from the SCL-90. Because this scale is not clearly defined and because many of the items overlap with the outcome measure, the Personal Stress scale was not used in the present study.

For each item on the CARS, subjects indicate 1) whether they have experienced the event and, if yes, 2) the intensity of stress they are currently experiencing in relation to the event. The intensity rating is based on a scale ranging from 0 (no current stress) to 9 (highest degree of stress). Scores are calculated as the sum of stress intensity ratings for items in each environment.

As reported by Zitzow (1984), test-retest reliability estimates across a two-week period ranged from .67 to .79 for the four environments and was .82 for the total score. Internal consistency reliability estimates (coefficient alpha) for the four environments were: Personal (.88), Academic (.89), Social (.89), and Family/Home (.89). Predictive validity was determined in a comparison of students referred for counseling with students not referred for counseling. Referred students had significantly higher stress scores in all environments than did non-referred students.

#### Ways of Coping Checklist-Revised

The revised Ways of Coping Checklist (Lazarus and Folkman, 1985) is a 66-item self-report measure that includes a broad range of cognitive and behavioral strategies used by people to manage stressful demands. The Ways of Coping scale was designed to measure coping processes in response to a particular stressful encounter. Subjects indicate on a 4-point Likert scale (0 = does not apply/not used; 3 = used a great deal) the extent to which they used each strategy in response to a particular stressful situation that they have recently experienced. In the present study, subjects were asked to base their responses on a stressful event or situation that happened in the context of their families within the past six months.

The scale taps two general forms of coping described by Lazarus and Folkman (1984): problem-focused coping, which is directed toward managing or altering the stress-producing situation, and emotion-focused coping, which is

directed toward regulating emotional responses to the situation. Factor analysis of the 66 items in the revised version of the Ways of Coping produced a total of eight scales. These include: problem-focused coping, wishful thinking, emotional detachment, seeking social support, emphasizing the positive, self-blame, tension-reduction, and self-isolation. Reliability estimates of the eight scales range from .56 to .85 (Folkman and Lazarus, 1985).

The predictive validity of the Ways of Coping scale has been demonstrated in a comparison of depressed and non-depressed subjects. Folkman and Lazarus (1986) found that depressed subjects used more confrontive coping, self-control, and escape-avoidance and accepted responsibility and sought more social support than did non-depressed subjects. Another study by Folkman and her colleagues (Folkman, Lazarus, Pimley, and Novacek, 1987), revealed consistent age differences in coping: younger people used more active, interpersonal, problem-focused forms of coping than did older people, and older people used more passive, intrapersonal emotion-focused forms of coping than did younger people.

#### Symptom Checklist-90-Revised

The SCL-90 (Derogatis, 1978) is a self-report symptom inventory designed to reflect psychiatric symptom patterns in a broad range of individuals, from non-patients to those with psychiatric disorders. The SCL-90 taps nine symptom dimensions. These include: somatization, obsessive-compulsive, interpersonal sensitivity, depression, anxiety, hostility, phobic anxiety, paranoid ideation, and psychoticism. It also includes several additional items which are clinically important although not included in the primary symptom dimensions. These are not scored collectively but are summed into the global score. The SCL-90 can be scored on several levels, the most comprehensive of which is

the Global Severity Index, which combines information on the number of symptoms and the intensity of perceived distress.

The psychometric properties of the SCL-90 are extensively documented. Internal consistency estimates of the nine dimensions range from .77 to .90. Test-retest estimates range from .78 to .90. The validity of the SCL-90 has been assessed in numerous studies described by Derogatis (1983). It has been found to be sensitive to the presence or alteration of depressive disorders, to change in symptom status in psychopharmacologic research and to stress-related conditions.

#### Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) is a ten-item instrument based on a definition of self-esteem as "the feeling that one is 'good enough.' The individual simply feels that he is a person of worth." (Rosenberg, 1965, p. 16). The Rosenberg scale has been used for almost three decades and continues to be the instrument of choice for many researchers interested in assessing self-esteem. Rosenberg (1965) reports a test-retest reliability of .92 and an internal consistency reliability of .72 for the scale. Construct validity has been determined in studies that have found a significant association between low self-esteem scores and depression, psychosomatic symptoms, and peer group reputation.

#### Demographic Questionnaire

A questionnaire was constructed for the purpose of obtaining general information (age, class, sex, race/ethnicity) and information about family background, including: parents' marital status; age at parental separation/divorce/death; current family situation; degree of financial dependence on family; number of siblings and birth order; family



socioeconomic status; type and amount of contact with family. Several other questions concerning academic status were included for use in another study.

### Procedure

Data collection took place over a 12 week period. At the time of recruitment, subjects signed up for one of three or four available data collection sessions taking place during the same or following week. Three trained undergraduate research assistants administered the packets of questionnaires to groups of two to fifteen subjects. Packets were arranged in two randomly selected orders (see Table 3) to allow for an assessment of possible order effects. An additional questionnaire concerning identity status, used in another study, was also included. The CARS was always administered first, since it was the only instrument that required oral directions, and the demographic questionnaire was always administered last.

Subjects were instructed to complete all questionnaires as directed and were given oral along with written instructions on the procedure for completing the CARS. Given that the packet of questionnaires was rather long (it took most subjects an hour to complete all questionnaires), subjects were reminded of the importance of answering all questions carefully and were given the option to forgo the questionnaires and collect their credit. No subjects opted for this alternative. However, a number of subjects failed to complete some questionnaires and/or left blank a number of items from various questionnaires. This was particularly true of the Ways of Coping and the Attitudinal Independence scale of the PSI. Also, some subjects with deceased parents who did not report an alternative parental figure did not complete either the Mother or the Father version of the PSI.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESULTS

#### Preliminary Analyses

##### Order Effects

T-tests were performed on mean scores from the PSI, Ways of Coping, SCL-90 and Self-esteem Scale to determine whether the order in which questionnaires were administered influenced subjects' responses. Scores from the CARS were not included with these analyses, since the CARS was always administered first. Of the eighteen tests performed, only one significant difference emerged: subjects from the two groups differed in their responses to the Attitudinal Independence scale of the father version of the PSI,  $t(211) = -2.03$ ,  $p < .05$  ( $M = 12.90$  for order 1,  $13.57$  for order 2). There are several reasons to believe that this difference represents a chance finding rather than an effect of questionnaire order. First is the fact that this was the only difference observed. If the difference was a result of questionnaire order, one would expect to find a similar pattern of differences on other PSI scales that are significantly correlated with the Attitudinal Independence scale, father version, particularly the same scale from the mother version (see Table 4). Second, the use of multiple t-tests creates a risk for Type I errors. Therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude that questionnaire order did not significantly influence subjects' responses.

##### Correlations Among Psychological Variables

Table 4 presents correlations among the twenty-one psychological variables. Correlations among the subscales of the PSI reveal a similar pattern for both parents. Functional, Emotional, and Conflictual Independence were all significantly intercorrelated; Conflictual Independence was not associated with

Functional or Emotional Independence but was negatively associated with Attitudinal Independence. Scores from the mother version of the PSI were significantly associated with scores from the father version, with  $r$ 's ranging from .50 to .67.

The Academic, Family, and Social Stress scales of the CARS were significantly intercorrelated, with  $r$ 's ranging from .58 to .63. Stress from all three domains was negatively associated with Emotional and Conflictual Independence from both parents and with Functional Independence from father only. Stress was not associated with Attitudinal Independence. The eight Ways of Coping scales tended to be moderately intercorrelated but not consistently. SCL-90 scores were negatively associated with Emotional and Conflictual Independence from both parents and Functional Independence from father. SCL-90 scores were strongly related to stress scores from all three domains and moderately related to all forms of coping. Finally, Self-esteem was generally not associated with PSI scores but was moderately associated with stress and coping scores and SCL-90 scores.

#### Correlations Between Psychological Variables and Demographic Variables

Correlations between certain demographic and psychological variables revealed some interesting patterns of results. Family socioeconomic status (SES) was negatively associated with several of the PSI subscales: Functional Independence, mother ( $r = -.13$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and father ( $r = -.27$ ,  $p < .001$ ); Attitudinal Independence, mother ( $r = -.11$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and father ( $r = -.20$ ,  $p < .01$ ); and Emotional Independence, father only ( $r = -.14$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Family SES was not associated with Conflictual Independence from either parent or with any other psychological variable. Overall, then, it appears that subjects from high SES families were more dependent on parents, particularly fathers, than were subjects from relatively lower SES families.

Financial independence was calculated as a composite score based on employment, number of hours worked per week, contribution to family income, and contribution to the cost of one's education. Financial independence from parents was associated with only one PSI scale: Conflictual Independence from father ( $r = -.20, p < .05$ ). Financial independence was also associated with Family Stress ( $r = .24, p < .01$ ), Academic Stress ( $r = .21, p < .05$ ), and SCL-90 ( $r = .21, p < .05$ ). It appears that students who work while in school to support themselves and/or their families are at higher risk for stress, particularly in the family and academic domains, as well as for psychological symptoms. One could hypothesize that the association between financial independence and conflictual dependence on father reflects students' feelings of resentment about not receiving more financial support.

Amount of contact with family was operationalized as the number of times per week subjects talked to their parents on the phone. Amount of contact was negatively associated with several PSI subscales: Functional Independence from mother ( $r = -.35, p < .001$ ) and father ( $r = -.29, p < .001$ ); Emotional Independence from mother ( $r = -.42, p < .001$ ) and father ( $r = -.31, p < .001$ ); and Attitudinal Independence from mother only ( $r = -.19, p < .01$ ). Amount of contact was also associated with Family Stress ( $r = .19, p < .01$ ) and SCL-90 ( $r = .20, p < .01$ ). It is consistent with the hypotheses of the study that frequent contact with parents would be associated with dependence on parents, family stress and symptoms. Frequent telephone contact with parents may represent the student's inability to achieve an optimum level of differentiation from his or her family.

One final demographic variable, age at parents' divorce (or separation or death), is associated with several psychological variables: Conflictual Independence from mother ( $r = -.35, p < .01, n = 67$ ) and father



( $r = -.25$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $n = 63$ ); Attitudinal Independence from mother ( $r = .22$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $n = 62$ ); and Family Stress ( $r = .24$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $n = 67$ ). It appears, then, that children who are older at the time of their parents' divorce (separation, death) are more likely to be ambivalently dependent on their parents, more likely to hold different views than their mothers and more likely to experience family stress. This pattern of findings is consistent with research that has examined the impact of parental divorce on children of different ages (Peck and Manocherian, 1989).

### Group Differences

#### Gender

A 2(Gender) X 2(Class) X 2(Parent) MANOVA with repeated measures on the third factor was performed on the scales of the PSI. Gender differences in separation were first assessed across both parents. The multivariate F statistic was significant for Gender,  $F(4, 199) = 10.26$ ,  $p < .0001$ , indicating that there was a gender difference in separation. The univariate tests revealed that the difference was due to one effect of the Emotional Independence subscale of the PSI,  $F(1, 202) = 18.32$ ,  $p < .0001$ . The means, presented in Table 5, indicate that females were more emotionally dependent on parents than were males. The multivariate F statistic for the Gender X Parent interaction was also significant,  $F(4, 199) = 7.12$ ,  $p < .0001$ , indicating a different pattern of dependence on mothers and fathers for males and females. The univariate tests revealed that the difference was due to Attitudinal Independence,  $F(1, 202) = 26.23$ ,  $p < .0001$ ; Functional Independence  $F(1, 202) = 11.25$ ,  $p < .001$ ; and Conflictual Independence  $F(1, 202) = 3.88$ ,  $p < .05$ . On all three subscales, females were more dependent on mothers than on fathers whereas males were more consistently dependent on both parents (see Table 5).

A 2(Gender) X 2(Class) MANOVA was performed on the three stress scales of the CARS. The multivariate F statistic was significant for Gender,  $F(3, 232) = 5.01, p < .01$ , indicating that there was a gender difference in stress. The univariate tests revealed that the difference was due to Family Stress,  $F(1, 234) = 12.61, p < .0001$ , and Academic Stress,  $F(1, 234) = 6.24, p < .05$ . Females scored higher than males on both scales, reporting more family stress ( $M = 38.36$  for females,  $26.64$  for males) and more academic stress ( $M = 80.08$  for females,  $68.61$  for males).

A similar procedure revealed a gender difference in coping as well, multivariate  $F(8, 183) = 2.10, p < .04$ . The univariate tests revealed that the difference was due to Wishful Thinking,  $F(1, 190) = 3.92, p < .05$ , and Seek Social Support,  $F(1, 190) = 10.89, p < .01$ . Females used more wishful thinking ( $M = 8.34$  for females,  $6.54$  for males) and were more likely to seek social support ( $M = 9.94$  for females,  $7.52$  for males) than were males.

Finally, analysis of variance was used to assess gender differences in SCL-90 and Self-esteem scores. There was a main effect for Gender on SCL-90,  $F(1, 234) = 12.52, p < .0001$ , with females reporting more symptoms ( $M = 76.00$ ) than males ( $M = 53.19$ ). There was a main effect for Gender on Self-esteem as well,  $F(1, 234) = 4.05, p < .05$ , with males reporting higher self-esteem ( $M = 34.07$ ) than females ( $M = 33.08$ ).

#### College Class

Means by Class are presented in Table 6. There were no significant effects of Class on separation from parents nor was there a significant Gender X Class or Class X Parent interaction. Freshmen were not more dependent on parents than were juniors. The MANOVAs on stress and coping also revealed no class differences. Class differences did emerge in the ANOVAs performed on SCL-90 and Self-esteem: there was a main effect for Class on SCL-90,

$F(1, 234) = 5.01, p < .03$ , with freshmen reporting more symptoms ( $M = 75.71$ ) than juniors ( $M = 60.35$ ); and there was a main effect for Class on Self-esteem,  $F(1, 234) = 3.92, p < .05$ , with juniors reporting higher self-esteem ( $M = 33.96$ ) than freshmen ( $M = 32.96$ ). Thus, the hypotheses that freshmen would be more dependent on parents and would experience more stress than juniors were not supported in this study. However, freshmen did report more symptoms and lower self-esteem than did juniors.

### Parents' Marital Status

Because a large percentage of subjects came from divorced or otherwise non-intact families (see Table 1), it was possible to assess differences on the various measures based on parents' marital status. Because of the small numbers of subjects from families in which parents were separated or deceased, it was not possible to break down the sample into such discrete groups. For the purposes of these analyses, subjects from all forms of non-intact families were placed into one group and compared with subjects whose parents were married. Means by parents' marital status are presented in Table 7.

A 2(Gender) X 2(Marital Status) X 2(Parent) MANOVA with repeated measures on the third factor was performed on the scales of the PSI. The multivariate  $F$  statistic was significant for Marital Status,  $F(4, 199) = 3.57, p < .01$ , indicating that there was a difference according to parents' marital status on separation from parents. The univariate tests revealed that the difference was due to one significant effect of Functional Independence,  $F(1, 202) = 12.74, p < .0001$ . Students from intact families were more functionally dependent on their parents than were students from non-intact families (see Table 7). The Marital status X Parent interaction was not significant, indicating that students from non-intact families were not more

dependent on one parent than on the other. The Gender X Marital Status interaction was also not significant. The MANOVAs involving stress and coping revealed no significant differences according to parents' marital status. Finally, the ANOVAs on SCL-90 and Self-esteem revealed no significant differences according to parents' marital status.

### Multiple Regression Analyses

Stepwise multiple regression analyses were performed to test the hypotheses of the study. Because gender differences were observed in most of the study variables, these regressions were performed separately for men and women. In reporting these results, only variables with significant predictive power are shown.

#### Stress, Self-esteem and Symptoms

The first set of regressions investigated the contributions of stress and self-esteem to the prediction of psychological symptoms. The results are summarized in Table 8. For females, family stress was the best predictor of symptoms, accounting for 27% of the variance. Self-esteem and social stress together accounted for another 12% of the variance in symptoms. For males, academic stress was the best predictor of symptoms, accounting for 26% of the variance; self-esteem accounted for another 11% of the variance. The pattern that emerges is an interesting one: for females, family stress is the most important predictor of symptoms, whereas academic stress plays no role at all. For males, the opposite is true. Apparently, females are more vulnerable to the psychological effects of family stress and less vulnerable to the effects of academic stress than are males. For both males and females, self-esteem is a significant predictor of symptoms but one that is secondary to stress of one kind or another.



### Separation and Academic, Family, and Social Stress

The second set of regressions investigated the contribution of separation from mother and father to the prediction of academic, family, and social stress. The results are summarized in Table 9. For females, conflictual and emotional dependence on mother were the only significant predictors of academic and social stress; together, they accounted for 14% of the variance in academic stress and 13% of the variance in social stress. The results were somewhat different for family stress. Conflictual dependence on mother was also the best predictor of family stress, but in this case it accounted for 35% of the variance. Conflictual dependence on father was the other significant predictor of family stress, accounting for another 5% of the variance. Therefore, dependence on parents accounts for more variance in family stress than it does in academic or social stress. Conflictual, and to a lesser extent, emotional dependence on mother appear to be the most important predictors of stress in females. Conflictual dependence on father plays a smaller role as a significant predictor of family stress only.

The results for males are less consistent than those for females. Functional dependence on father and conflictual dependence on mother were the only significant predictors of academic stress in males, accounting for a total of 20% of the variance. Emotional and conflictual dependence on father were the only significant predictors of social stress, together accounting for 25% of the variance. As with females, conflictual dependence on mother accounted for a relatively large portion of the variance in family stress, 25%; emotional dependence on father accounted for another 13% of the variance in family stress. Overall, it appears that dependence on one or both parents is an important predictor of stress, particularly family stress, for both males and females. This finding is consistent with the hypotheses of the study.

### Separation and Symptoms

A third set of regressions examined the contribution of separation from mother and father in the prediction of psychological symptoms. The results are summarized in Table 10. It appears that conflictual dependence on the same-sex parent is the best predictor of symptoms in both males and females, accounting for 19% of the variance in each case. For females only, a second predictor, emotional dependence on mother, accounted for another 3% of the variance in symptoms.

### Coping and Symptoms

A final set of regressions examined the contribution of coping in the prediction of symptoms. The results are summarized in Table 11. For females, two of the Ways of Coping scales, Detachment and Wishful Thinking, accounted for a total of 11% of the variance in symptoms. For males, Keep to Self accounted for 28% of the variance in symptoms; Detachment accounted for another 8%. It appears that coping plays a more important role in the prediction of symptoms for males than it does for females, and coping strategies involving self-isolation are the most predictive of all. It is interesting that no coping strategies were negatively associated with symptoms, since one might expect certain types of coping to be predictive of an absence of psychological symptoms, that is, psychological well-being.

### Subjects' Descriptions of Family Stressors

For the purpose of completing the Ways of Coping scale, subjects were asked to describe in detail a recent stressful family event or situation. These descriptions turned out to be an unexpectedly rich source of data concerning students' experience of family stress. Since a detailed content analysis of these descriptions is beyond the scope of the present study, a simple summary of the

types of stressors described, along with samples of representative responses, are presented below.

1. Health problems or deaths of family members:

My father had been through treatment for Lymphoma, a form of cancer, for the second time. This created a very stressful existence at home while he was in the hospital. (female freshman).

My grandmother is slowly losing her mind to old age. She is unable to have a conversation longer than a few minutes. I see her getting worse and it worries me. Doctors say she had a mini-stroke. My mother and grandfather watch over her now (male junior).

The death of my grandfather whom I lived with and was very close to. It was very sudden and extremely unexpected. It affected almost every aspect of my life (female junior).

2. Family financial problems, usually a parent's loss of a job:

The most recent family event that has had a negative impact on my life must be the financial status of our family-run store. With the poor economic times, the family business has been affected greatly, and I worry about my parents' financial status all the time (male freshman).

My father lost his job. He got laid off, was out of work, for three months. I didn't know how long it would be until he found another job, especially during these times and at his age. . . This was quite stressful on me (male junior).

3. Concern about well-being of sibling:

My sister is going through a rough divorce and I am extremely concerned about her two children as well as herself (female freshman).

4. Arguments with family members, often involving a difference of values.

Went home for one day. . . My entire family gave me shit for my appearance! I have become more lax - I don't care what I look like as long as I'm comfortable. My family cared and tried to change my mode of dress. Kept telling me how unkempt, messy I looked. Got in a big family brawl about my appearance, which led to other arguments (female freshman).

My mother and I had problems two years ago because I had to tell her about my sexual activities. We were at war for three months then I lied to her to make peace but I was still angry. This past November she brought it up again and I just wanted to forget about it but she won't let me. I don't like being home. While home for intersession, there was a lot of stress (female junior).

5. Being caught in the middle of arguments between other family members:

My mother kicked one of my brothers out of the house. I was the only one he was in contact with so I got pushed in the middle. I had all my sisters saying bad stuff about him and my mother asking about him one minute then putting him down the next (female freshman).

6. Conflicts related to parents' divorce:

Parents getting divorced. Father refuses to pay for room and board. Distancing himself from his children. Visited him but he said that it was Mom's fault. Nothing he could do (female junior)

Going to court with my mother to sue my father for delinquent child support payments. We finally came to a conclusion, a settlement. Now we must return to court, because he will not pay the settlement. He faces a jail term because of the back child support (female freshman).



7. Conflicts with parents regarding money:

My parents kept hassling me about getting a job, not having money to pay for school or (my expenses). We yelled at each other, and I had a friend from school pick me up. That is why my present address is now here at school (male junior).

8. Christmas with the family:

Christmas eve was stressful because the family got together and really didn't care about why we were there. Meanwhile, my mother slaved away and we all felt so guilty that she went to so much trouble preparing dinner that nobody had a good time and the holiday dragged and made everyone uncomfortable (female freshman).

Christmas eve, family argument which aroused plenty of confused, negative feelings towards one another. Our family is often evolving and changing and many of us in my family are opinionated and loud, but when it comes to family there is a great and detrimental lack of communication (female junior).

It should be noted that this list of the more commonly cited categories of family stressors is by no means an exhaustive one. Subjects described many other family situations as stressful as well. Among these were: parents' fighting; lying to parents; concern about living up to parents' expectations; parents' alcoholism; conflicts with stepparents; concern about a parent's or grandparent's well-being; and pressure from parents about academic performance. If nothing else, this descriptive data suggests that there are wide individual differences in students' experiences of family stress.

In addition, it is important to note that a significant number of subjects did not report a family stressor. Some subjects described a stressful academic or social event, rather than a family one. Still others either left the page blank or indicated that they had not experienced a recent stressful family event. A few elaborated on the absence of family stress in their lives, and these responses are quite interesting:

I cannot think of one family event that was stressful.  
Since I went away to school, my family relationship has improved greatly. I can view my parents more as people than parents. I have not had a conflict with my sisters either (female freshman).

My family never causes me stress. We've created a unique blend. We all rely on each other a great deal for stability and friendship, but we also know how to give the others flexibility and freedom. I can honestly say that my family is something that never causes me stress (female junior).

The first of these two women describes the way in which her move to college has facilitated a positive shifting of family roles, enabling her to experience her parents as people (one might infer from her apparent satisfaction that her parents are able to experience her as an adult as well). The second woman describes what appears to be a well-differentiated family system (Sabetelli and Mazor, 1985), in which individual autonomy can coexist with family cohesiveness. However, most students (particularly women) had little difficulty recalling and describing a family stressor (indeed, many provided elaborate detail and analysis of the situation). This fact is consistent with the quantitative results described above, namely that family stress plays an important role in the psychological well-being of female students.

## CHAPTER 4

### DISCUSSION

#### Overall Findings

The primary purpose of this study was to explore the relationships among separation-individuation, stress, and psychological symptoms in a sample of late adolescent college students. The results support the view that separation-individuation plays an important role in the prediction of stress and symptoms in this sample. A series of gender differences indicates that these experiences are different for males and females.

For both males and females, dependence on one or both parents was associated with stress from all three domains of life but was most strongly associated with family stress. This finding is consistent with the hypothesis that difficulties in the process of separation can make the late adolescent more vulnerable to stress and to family stress in particular. Conflictual dependence was the dimension of separation that was most consistently associated with stress. Late adolescents who are bound to their parents in relationships characterized by anger, resentment, and guilt are most at risk of experiencing stress. Also interesting was the finding that conflictual dependence on fathers was associated with psychological symptoms in males whereas conflictual dependence on mothers was associated with psychological symptoms in females. Perhaps late adolescents are particularly sensitive to conflict in their relationships with their same-sex parents, with whom they are more likely to identify.

A second hypothesis of the study concerned the relative importance of family stress in the prediction of psychological symptoms. For females, family stress was the best predictor of symptoms, followed by self-esteem and social

stress. For males, academic stress and self-esteem were the only significant predictors of symptoms. It appears that females are more vulnerable than males to the effects of interpersonal stress. This finding is consistent with findings reported by Siddique and D'Arcy (1984) and likely reflects females' greater concern with relational issues in general (Chodorow, 1978). The fact that self-esteem emerges as a significant predictor of symptoms for both males and females is consistent with Pearlin's (1983) contention that self-esteem plays a moderating role in the relationship between chronic life stress and psychological symptoms.

A third hypothesis concerned the use of coping strategies in relation to a recent family stressor. Strategies involving self-isolation, emotional detachment, and wishful thinking were most strongly associated with psychological symptoms. However, it is not possible to make a general statement about coping based on these results, given that responses were based on a single stressful encounter and that the nature of encounters varied widely across individuals. Folkman and Lazarus (1985) emphasize the importance of viewing coping as a process and making assessments across many different situations. A systematic examination of students' use of coping strategies in relation to stressors from all three domains of life would prove useful for evaluating the stability of coping across situations.

Gender differences emerged in virtually all of the variables in the study. Females were more emotionally dependent on parents than were males. Females were also more dependent on mothers than on fathers whereas males were more consistently dependent on both parents. In some ways, these findings are consistent with feminist psychoanalytic theory (Chodorow, 1978) which postulates a unique and enduring intensity in the mother-daughter relationship. It is as a result of the intensity of this primary relationship that



females are more "socially connected" than males. However, it should be noted that in this study females were not more dependent on parents across all dimensions. In fact there were no significant gender differences in conflictual, attitudinal, and functional dependence. It may be particularly important that females were not more conflictually dependent on parents than were males, given the primary role played by this dimension in the prediction of both stress and symptoms. However, it should be kept in mind that for females, emotional dependence on mother did play a significant, albeit secondary, role in the prediction of academic and social stress as well as symptoms.

Gender differences in stress, self-esteem, and symptoms were more consistent. Females reported more family and academic stress than did males. They also reported more psychological symptoms and had lower self-esteem than did males. These findings are generally consistent with those of earlier studies (Sowa and Lustman, 1984; Siddique and D'Arcy, 1984). The question remains of how to make sense of these pervasive gender differences. This study does not provide any simple answers. Females' experience of greater emotional dependence on parents does not adequately account for their higher levels of stress and psychological symptoms. One must conclude that factors beyond those explored in this study are contributing to the greater incidence of stress and psychological symptoms consistently found in females relative to males.

Freshmen and juniors did not differ in degree of dependence on parents or in the experience of stress. Significant differences emerged only in self-esteem and psychological symptoms. It seems likely that these groups were sufficiently heterogeneous to rule out any between-group differences in separation or stress. There are probably many freshmen who have achieved an optimum level of independence from their parents just as there are many

juniors who continue to struggle with separation issues. Sabatelli and Mazor (1985) remind us that the separation process occurs within the context of a complicated family system; some systems have no difficulty tolerating an individual's efforts at gaining independence whereas others actively block such efforts. When considering this larger context, the specific age of the individual becomes less relevant.

Although this study provides no clear explanation for the college class differences observed in symptoms and self-esteem, there are many possible ways to account for this finding. Class differences in symptoms and self-esteem may reflect differential attrition: some of the more symptomatic freshmen (and/or those with very low self-esteem) may drop out of school before they make it to their junior year. It is not surprising that juniors report higher self-esteem than freshmen, given the higher status accorded to upperclassmen in most college communities. Also, most juniors probably have a larger experience base and a larger repertoire of accomplishments on which to base their self-evaluations than do most freshmen.

Finally, only one difference based on parents' marital status emerged in this study. Students from intact families were more functionally dependent on parents than were students from non-intact families. Perhaps this reflects a tendency for children of single parents to be more functionally self-sufficient from an earlier age. Although this is an interesting finding, what is more interesting is the lack of differences observed in the other separation dimensions. It appears that students from non-intact families do not have more conflictual relationships with their parents, nor do they experience more family stress than do students from intact families. However, it would be unwise to draw definitive conclusions from these results, given the heterogeneity of the non-intact group. Although most subjects came from divorced families and most

lived with their mothers, there was still a great deal of variability in this group. For example, some subjects had one or more stepparent; some had parents who divorced when they were very young, whereas others had parents who had separated very recently. In future studies, it will be important to examine the effects of such variations in family structure.

### Limitations of the Study

An important limitation of this study is its cross-sectional design. It is not possible to draw conclusions about causality based on the available data. Thus, although it is tempting to conclude that dependence on parents causes stress which in turn causes symptoms, it is equally possible that the presence of symptoms causes individuals to perceive conflict in their relationships with their parents and to perceive events in their lives to be very stressful. A third possibility is that dependence, stress, and psychological symptoms are all manifestations of some kind of general underlying psychological vulnerability, such as that described by Gruen et. al. (1988). Only a longitudinal design has the potential to untangle and uncover any causal links that may exist among these variables.

A second limitation of the study is the sheer number of variables included in the design. With twenty-one psychological variables, it becomes difficult to interpret the meaning of the many relationships observed. For example, separate analyses suggest that separation, stress, self-esteem, and coping are all associated with psychological symptoms. Because of the large number of variables involved, it was not possible to determine exactly how these variables interact in the prediction of symptoms. It would be best to consider this an exploratory study, one that just begins to examine the patterns of relationships among a large number of variables.

It must be kept in mind that this study was based on the experience of primarily white, middle class college students. Many of the issues addressed in this study are probably not relevant for populations of less educated, non-white, and/or lower-class young adults. Fulmer (1989) points out that the tasks of young adulthood are very different for lower class men and women, many of whom have already become parents themselves and all of whom are faced with serious economic challenges. Future research should explore the developmental experiences of young adults from different populations.

A fourth limitation of this study is its reliance on students' self-reports. From such a perspective, one can only make inferences about the functioning of the family as a system. An ideal study of the adolescent separation process might be based on naturalistic observation of the entire family system. Given the difficulties inherent in such an undertaking, an alternative approach might be to gather self-reports from more than one family member, perhaps in interview form. The richness of students' descriptions of family stressors indicates that a great deal of information could be gained through semi-structured interviews both with students, about their experiences of becoming adults within the contexts of their families; and with parents, about their experiences of their children's developing autonomy.

In summary, this study provides preliminary evidence of a relationship between the process of separation-individuation and the experience of stress in late adolescent college students. Although further research is called for, these findings suggest that college counselors should carefully assess the current family situations of their distressed clients. When insight oriented therapy is not indicated or available, students experiencing separation difficulties can be taught to identify and manage their responses to the major sources of stress in their lives.



APPENDIX A  
DATA TABLES

Table 1  
Description of Sample  
According to Parents' Marital Status and Custodial Parent

	<u>Females</u>		<u>Males</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
<u>Parents' Marital Status:</u>						
Married	111	.66	40	.57	151	.63
Separated	5	.03	2	.05	7	.03
Divorced	39	.23	27	.39	66	.28
Mother Deceased	3	.02	1	.01	4	.02
Father Deceased	10	.06	0	0	10	.04
Other	1	.01	0	0	1	<.01
Total Non-Intact	58	.34	30	.43	88	.37
<u>Custodial Parent (s) of Subjects from Non-Intact Families:</u>						
Mother	37	.64	16	.53	53	.60
Mother and Stepfather	10	.17	6	.20	16	.18
Father	4	.07	2	.07	6	.07
Father and Stepmother	4	.07	4	.14	8	.10
Other	2	.03	0	0	2	.02
Information Missing	1	.02	2	.07	3	.03

Table 2

Selected Items from Personal Stress Scale of CARS  
and Corresponding SCL-90-R Items

Item #	CARS Items	Item #	SCL-90 Items
39.	Lack of ability to make decisions.	46.	Difficulty making decisions.
55.	Fear of personal harm.	80.	Feeling that something bad is going to happen to you.
59.	Difficulty with personal sexuality/homosexuality.	5.	Loss of sexual interest or pleasure.
		84.	Having thoughts about sex that bother you a lot.
63.	Concern over physical health.	87.	Idea that something is seriously wrong with your body.
67.	Lack of self-motivation.	28.	Feeling blocked in getting things done.
71.	Lack of self-confidence.	41.	Feeling inferior to others.
75.	Fear of being alone.	75.	Feeling nervous when you are left alone.
83.	Feelings of anxiousness or general tension	2.	Nervousness or shaking inside.
		31.	Worrying too much about things.
		33.	Feeling fearful.
87.	Feeling depressed.	30.	Feeling blue.
		54.	Feeling hopeless about the future.
		79.	Feeling worthless.
91.	Contemplation of suicide.	15.	Thoughts about ending your life.
		59.	Thoughts of death or dying.
95.	Change in personal habits (sleeping, eating, etc.).	19.	Poor appetite.
		44.	Trouble falling asleep.
		60.	Overeating.
		64.	Awakening in the early morning.
		66.	Sleep that is restless or disturbed.

Table 3  
Orders of Questionnaire Administration

	Order 1	Order 2
1.	CARS	CARS
2.	SCL-90	Ways of Coping
3.	PSI	(Identity Status)
4.	Self-Esteem	Self-Esteem
5.	(Identity Status)	PSI
6.	Ways of Coping	SCL-90
7.	Demographics	Demographics

Table 4  
Correlation Matrix of Psychological Variables

Variables	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
1. Functional Indep. Mother	1.00	.73***	-.22***	.55***	.50***	.44***	.01
2. Emotional Indep. Mother		1.00	-.10	.51***	.32***	.54***	.17*
3. Conflictual Indep. Mother			1.00	-.24***	.05	.13*	.54***
4. Attitudinal Indep. Mother				1.00	.40***	.29***	-.13*
5. Functional Indep. Father					1.00	.73***	.01
6. Emotional Indep. Father						1.00	-.02
7. Conflictual Indep. Father							1.00
8. Attitudinal Indep. Father							
9. Family Stress							
10. Academic Stress							
11. Social Stress							
12. Problem-focused Coping							
13. Wishful Thinking							
14. Detachment							
15. Seek Social Support							
16. Focus on the Positive							
17. Self-blame							
18. Tension Reduction							
19. Keep to Self							
20. SCL-90							
21. Self-esteem							

\*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

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Table 4 (Cont.)

Variables	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.
1. Functional Indep. Mother	.34***	-.03	-.07	-.09	-.02	-.13*	-.02
2. Emotional Indep. Mother	.24***	-.17*	-.15*	-.19**	-.15*	-.20**	-.16**
3. Conflictual Indep. Mother	-.06	-.59***	-.33***	-.29***	-.30**	-.27***	-.21***
4. Attitudinal Indep. Mother	.67***	.08	.03	.02	.02	-.06	-.11
5. Functional Indep. Father	.61***	-.16**	-.20**	-.26***	-.02	-.06	-.21**
6. Emotional Indep. Father	.53***	-.22***	-.24***	-.25***	-.11	-.17**	-.23***
7. Conflictual Indep. Father	-.27***	-.51***	-.27***	-.30***	-.22**	-.21**	-.14*
8. Attitudinal Indep. Father	1.00	.01	-.07	-.10	-.04	-.04	-.17*
9. Family Stress		1.00	.62***	.58***	.25**	.29**	.16**
10. Academic Stress			1.00	.63***	.20**	.25***	.24***
11. Social Stress				1.00	.06	.17**	.17**
12. Problem-focused Coping					1.00	.29***	.23***
13. Wishful Thinking						1.00	.30***
14. Detachment							1.00
15. Seek Social Support							
16. Focus on the Positive							
17. Self-blame							
18. Tension Reduction							
19. Keep to Self							
20. SCL-90							
21. Self-esteem							

\*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$ 

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Table 4 (Cont.)

Variables	15.	16.	17.	18.	19.	20.	21.
1. Functional Indep. Mother	-.23***	-.14	-.05	-.12*	.04	-.08	-.05
2. Emotional Indep. Mother	-.30***	-.22***	-.15*	-.19**	-.12*	-.21**	-.05
3. Conflictual Indep. Mother	-.14*	-.19**	-.23***	-.34***	-.22**	-.45***	.13*
4. Attitudinal Indep. Mother	-.15*	-.10	.01	-.08	.03	.06	-.20**
5. Functional Indep. Father	-.14*	-.12*	-.04	-.15*	-.08	-.16**	-.09
6. Emotional Indep. Father	-.24***	-.15*	-.12*	-.22**	-.11	-.19**	-.09
7. Conflictual Indep. Father	-.02	-.20**	-.19**	-.24***	-.29***	-.38***	.06
8. Attitudinal Indep. Father	-.13*	-.10	-.03	-.10	.00	.01	-.16*
9. Family Stress	.23***	.18**	.11	.26***	.28***	.53***	-.17**
10. Academic Stress	.16*	.12*	.18**	.17**	.26***	.51***	-.26***
11. Social Stress	.12*	.05	.08	.19**	.21**	.49***	-.24***
12. Problem-focused Coping	.40***	.46***	.50***	.35***	.28***	.24***	.08
13. Wishful Thinking	.43***	.29***	.47***	.31***	.42***	.32***	-.14*
14. Detachment	.06	.31***	.29***	.37***	.38***	.30***	-.17**
15. Seek Social Support	1.00	.41***	.32***	.28***	.03	.14*	.19**
16. Focus on the Positive		1.00	.26***	.34***	.26***	.18**	.14*
17. Self-blame			1.00	.41***	.32***	.25***	-.19**
18. Tension Reduction				1.00	.31***	.25***	-.06
19. Keep to Self					1.00	.31***	-.25***
20. SCL-90						1.00	-.38***
21. Self-esteem							1.00

\*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 5  
Means by Gender

Variables	<u>Females</u>			<u>Males</u>		
	Mean	SD	(N)	Mean	SD	(N)
<u>PSI Mother scales:</u>						
Functional	30.18	10.51	(165)	37.15	8.13	(67)
Emotional	39.80	13.48	(166)	50.22	10.54	(67)
Conflictual	75.26	17.91	(165)	79.59	15.09	(68)
Attitudinal	28.27	11.36	(158)	29.20	12.04	(64)
<u>PSI Father Scales:</u>						
Functional	36.69	11.35	(157)	37.51	10.42	(68)
Emotional	43.83	14.48	(157)	49.00	13.11	(68)
Conflictual	76.82	15.51	(155)	81.71	16.02	(68)
Attitudinal	32.52	13.43	(151)	29.77	12.88	(66)
<u>CARS scales:</u>						
Family Stress	38.36	23.43	(168)	26.64	18.01	(70)
Academic Stress	80.08	30.22	(168)	68.61	30.86	(70)
Social Stress	45.38	22.81	(168)	44.06	24.26	(70)
<u>Ways of Coping Scales:</u>						
Problem-focused	12.91	6.24	(155)	11.66	6.34	(59)
Wishful Thinking	8.34	4.44	(160)	6.54	4.25	(61)
Detachment	6.71	3.35	(156)	6.15	3.23	(60)
Seek Social Support	9.94	4.49	(155)	7.52	4.54	(62)
Focus on the Positive	4.45	2.57	(161)	4.13	2.53	(62)
Self-blame	2.62	2.76	(155)	2.27	2.21	(62)
Tension Reduction	2.52	2.05	(160)	1.92	1.82	(62)
Keep to Self	2.87	2.20	(156)	2.78	1.98	(60)
SCL-90	76.00	46.84	(169)	53.19	36.18	(69)
Self-esteem	33.08	3.46	(168)	34.07	3.41	(70)

Table 6  
Means by Class

Variables	<u>Freshmen</u>			<u>Juniors</u>		
	Mean	SD	(N)	Mean	SD	(N)
<u>PSI Mother Scales:</u>						
Functional	31.38	10.69	(136)	33.33	9.80	(96)
Emotional	42.12	14.43	(136)	43.75	12.15	(96)
Conflictual	75.61	17.47	(137)	77.83	16.85	(96)
Attitudinal	28.59	11.47	(130)	28.47	11.71	(92)
<u>PSI Father Scales:</u>						
Functional	35.66	11.56	(136)	38.91	9.99	(89)
Emotional	44.02	14.93	(136)	47.51	12.94	(89)
Conflictual	77.67	16.35	(135)	79.30	14.93	(88)
Attitudinal	30.63	12.50	(131)	33.28	14.36	(86)
<u>CARS Scales:</u>						
Family Stress	37.00	22.27	(140)	31.59	22.87	(98)
Academic Stress	78.21	29.42	(140)	74.56	32.69	(98)
Social Stress	46.61	22.19	(140)	40.41	24.42	(98)
<u>Ways of Coping Scales:</u>						
Problem-focused	12.59	5.99	(126)	12.53	6.71	(88)
Wishful Thinking	8.25	4.53	(130)	7.28	4.30	(91)
Detachment	6.71	3.55	(128)	6.15	2.86	(88)
Seek Social Support	9.94	4.42	(126)	7.52	4.90	(91)
Focus on the Positive	4.45	2.66	(130)	4.13	2.43	(93)
Self-blame	2.68	2.62	(126)	2.27	2.51	(91)
Tension Reduction	2.52	2.03	(130)	1.92	1.98	(92)
Keep to Self	2.87	2.20	(126)	2.78	2.05	(90)
SCL-90	75.71	47.72	(140)	60.35	39.71	(98)
Self-esteem	32.96	3.41	(140)	33.96	3.48	(98)



Table 7  
Means by Parents' Marital Status

Variables	<u>Intact</u>			<u>Non-intact</u>		
	Mean	SD	(N)	Mean	SD	(N)
<u>PSI Mother scales:</u>						
Functional	30.99	9.99	(150)	34.39	10.72	(82)
Emotional	41.59	13.32	(150)	44.98	13.73	(83)
Conflictual	76.89	17.75	(149)	75.89	16.30	(84)
Attitudinal	27.80	11.44	(144)	29.90	11.68	(78)
<u>PSI Father scales:</u>						
Functional	35.46	10.70	(151)	39.96	11.23	(74)
Emotional	43.04	14.17	(151)	50.02	13.25	(74)
Conflictual	79.47	16.24	(150)	75.92	14.64	(73)
Attitudinal	29.41	12.70	(148)	36.56	13.33	(73)
<u>CARS scales:</u>						
Family Stress	34.66	21.95	(150)	35.35	23.75	(88)
Academic Stress	77.88	31.23	(150)	74.41	30.11	(88)
Social Stress	45.93	23.03	(150)	40.85	23.49	(88)
<u>Ways of Coping Scales:</u>						
Problem-focused	12.44	6.33	(134)	12.78	6.22	(80)
Wishful Thinking	8.12	4.39	(139)	7.39	4.56	(82)
Detachment	6.64	3.23	(136)	7.39	3.47	(82)
Seek Social Support	9.22	4.69	(138)	9.30	4.53	(79)
Focus on the Positive	4.29	2.57	(141)	4.48	2.56	(82)
Self-blame	2.65	2.65	(141)	2.28	2.55	(76)
Tension Reduction	2.41	2.05	(140)	2.24	1.94	(82)
Keep to Self	2.89	2.13	(135)	2.79	2.16	(81)
SCL-90	72.17	46.21	(151)	64.56	43.08	(87)
Self-esteem	33.37	3.62	(150)	33.39	3.22	(88)

Table 8

Stepwise Regression of Stress Variables and Self-Esteem on SCL-90

Variables entered into equation	Multiple R	R <sup>2</sup> Change	Beta	F	P
<u>SCL-90</u>					
<u>Females (N=166)</u>					
Family Stress	.52	.27	.36	60.92	< .0001
Self-esteem	.59	.08	-.27	44.74	< .0001
Social Stress	.63	.04	.24	34.94	< .0001
<u>Males (N=68)</u>					
Academic Stress	.51	.26	.39	23.54	< .0001
Self-esteem	.61	.11	-.35	19.08	< .0001

Table 9

Stepwise Regression of PSI Subscales on  
Academic, Family, and Social Stress

Variables entered into equation	Multiple R	R <sup>2</sup> Change	Beta	F	P
<u>Academic Stress</u>					
<u>Females (N = 143)</u>					
Conflictual Independence Mother	.31	.10	-.35	15.50	< .001
Emotional Independence Mother	.37	.04	-.20	11.28	< .001
<u>Males (N = 60)</u>					
Functional Independence Father	.35	.12	-.32	7.99	< .01
Conflictual Independence Mother	.45	.08	-.29	7.27	< .01
<u>Family Stress</u>					
<u>Females (N = 143)</u>					
Conflictual Independence Mother	.59	.35	-.46	76.44	< .0001
Conflictual Independence Father	.64	.05	-.27	47.86	< .0001
<u>Males (N = 60)</u>					
Conflictual Independence Mother	.50	.25	-.47	19.39	< .0001
Emotional Independence Father	.62	.13	-.37	17.94	< .0001
<u>Social Stress</u>					
<u>Females (N = 143)</u>					
Conflictual Independence Mother	.27	.07	-.31	10.76	< .001
Emotional Independence Mother	.36	.06	-.24	10.35	< .001
<u>Males (N = 60)</u>					
Emotional Independence Father	.38	.15	-.34	10.23	< .01
Conflictual Independence Father	.50	.10	-.33	9.80	< .01

Table 10  
Stepwise Regression of PSI Subscales on SCL-90

Variables entered into equation	Multiple R	R <sup>2</sup> Change	Beta	F	P
<u>SCL-90</u>					
<u>Females (N = 144)</u>					
Conflictual Independence Mother	.43	.19	-.47	33.37	< .0001
Emotional Independence Mother	.47	.03	-.19	20.60	< .0001
<u>Males (N = 60)</u>					
Conflictual Independence Father	.44	.19	-.44	13.84	< .001



Table 11

## Stepwise Regression of Ways of Coping Subscales on SCL-90

Variables entered into equation	Multiple R	R <sup>2</sup> Change	Beta	F	P
<u>SCL-90</u>					
<u>Females (N = 137)</u>					
Detachment	.26	.07	.21	9.82	< .01
Wishful Thinking	.33	.04	.20	7.98	< .001
<u>Males (N = 55)</u>					
Keep to Self	.53	.28	.40	21.34	< .0001
Detachment	.60	.08	.31	15.17	< .0001

## APPENDIX B

### PSYCHOLOGICAL SEPARATION INVENTORY

Instructions: The following list of statements describes different aspects of students' relationships with both their mother and father (or primary maternal and paternal figures). Imagine a scale ranging from 1 to 5 that tells how well each statement applies to you. In the space next to the statement, please enter a number from 1 (not at all true of me) to 5 (very true of me). If the statement does not apply enter 1. Please be completely honest. Your answers are entirely confidential and will be useful only if they accurately describe you.

Please respond to the following items based on your relationship with the woman who has been the primary maternal figure in your life (if this person is deceased and there is currently no other maternal figure in your life, check here \_\_\_ and skip to father section). Please indicate below about whom you will be responding:

\_\_\_ mother \_\_\_ stepmother \_\_\_ grandmother \_\_\_ other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

---

Not at all	A little bit	Moderately	Quite a bit	Very
true of me	true of me	true of me	true of me	true of me
1	2	3	4	5

---

- \_\_\_ 1. I like to show my friends pictures of my mother.
- \_\_\_ 2. Sometimes my mother is a burden to me.
- \_\_\_ 3. I feel longing if I am away from my mother for too long.
- \_\_\_ 4. My ideas regarding racial equality are similar to my mother's.
- \_\_\_ 5. My mother's wishes have influenced my selection of friends.
- \_\_\_ 6. I feel like I am constantly at war with my mother.
- \_\_\_ 7. I blame my mother for many of the problems I have.
- \_\_\_ 8. I wish I could trust my mother more.
- \_\_\_ 9. My attitudes about obscenity are similar to my mother's
- \_\_\_ 10. When I am in difficulty I usually call upon my mother to help me out of trouble.
- \_\_\_ 11. My mother is the most important person in the world to me.
- \_\_\_ 12. I have to be careful not to hurt my mother's feelings.
- \_\_\_ 13. I wish that my mother lived nearer so I could visit her more frequently.

- \_\_\_ 14. My opinions regarding the role of women are similar to my mother's.
- \_\_\_ 15. I often ask my mother to assist me in solving personal problems.
- \_\_\_ 16. I sometimes feel like I am being punished by my mother.
- \_\_\_ 17. Being away from my mother makes me feel lonely.
- \_\_\_ 18. I wish my mother wasn't so overprotective.
- \_\_\_ 19. My opinions regarding the role of men are similar to my mother's.
- \_\_\_ 20. I wouldn't make a major purchase without my mother's approval.
- \_\_\_ 21. I wish my mother wouldn't try to manipulate me.
- \_\_\_ 22. I wish my mother wouldn't try to make fun of me.
- \_\_\_ 23. I sometimes call home just to hear my mother's voice.
- \_\_\_ 24. My religious beliefs are similar to my mother's.
- \_\_\_ 25. My mother's wishes have influenced my choice of major at school.
- \_\_\_ 26. I feel that I have obligations to my mother that I wish I didn't have.
- \_\_\_ 27. My mother expects too much from me.
- \_\_\_ 28. I wish I could stop lying to my mother .
- \_\_\_ 29. My beliefs regarding how to raise children are similar to my mother's.
- \_\_\_ 30. My mother helps me to make my budget.
- \_\_\_ 31. While I am at home on a vacation I like to spend most of my time with my mother.
- \_\_\_ 32. I often wish that my mother would treat me more like an adult.
- \_\_\_ 33. After being with my mother for a vacation I find it difficult to leave her.
- \_\_\_ 34. My values regarding honesty are similar to my mother's.
- \_\_\_ 35. I generally consult with my mother when I make plans for an out of town weekend.
- \_\_\_ 36. I am often angry at my mother.
- \_\_\_ 37. I like to hug and kiss my mother.
- \_\_\_ 38. I hate it when my mother makes suggestions about what I do.
- \_\_\_ 39. My attitudes about solitude are similar to my mother's.
- \_\_\_ 40. I consult with my mother when deciding about part-time employment.
- \_\_\_ 41. I decide what to do according to whether my mother will approve of it.
- \_\_\_ 42. Even when my mother has a good idea I refuse to listen to it because she made it.
- \_\_\_ 43. When I do poorly in school, I feel like I am letting my mother down.
- \_\_\_ 44. My attitudes regarding environmental protection are similar to my mother's.
- \_\_\_ 45. I ask my mother what to do when I get into a tough situation.
- \_\_\_ 46. I wish my mother wouldn't try to get me to take sides with her.
- \_\_\_ 47. My mother is my best friend.
- \_\_\_ 48. I argue with my mother over little things.
- \_\_\_ 49. My beliefs about how the world began are similar to my mother's.

- \_\_\_ 50. I do what my mother decides on most questions that come up.
- \_\_\_ 51. I seem to be closer to my mother than most people my age.
- \_\_\_ 52. My mother is sometimes a source of embarrassment to me.
- \_\_\_ 53. Sometimes I think I am too dependent on my mother.
- \_\_\_ 54. My beliefs about what happens to people when they die are similar to my mother's.
- \_\_\_ 55. I ask for my mother's advice when I am planning my vacation time.
- \_\_\_ 56. I am sometimes ashamed of my mother .
- \_\_\_ 57. I care too much about my mother's reactions.
- \_\_\_ 58. I get angry when my mother criticizes me.
- \_\_\_ 59. My attitudes regarding sex are similar to my mother's.
- \_\_\_ 60. I like to have my mother help me pick out the clothing I buy for special occasions.
- \_\_\_ 61. I sometimes feel like an extension of my mother.
- \_\_\_ 62. When I don't write my mother often enough I feel guilty.
- \_\_\_ 63. I feel uncomfortable keeping things from my mother.
- \_\_\_ 64. My attitudes regarding national defense are similar to my mother's.
- \_\_\_ 65. I call my mother whenever anything goes wrong.
- \_\_\_ 66. I often have to make decisions for my mother.
- \_\_\_ 67. I'm not sure I could make it in life without my mother .
- \_\_\_ 68. I sometimes resent it when my mother tells me what to do.
- \_\_\_ 69. My attitudes regarding mentally ill people are similar to my mother's.

Please respond to the following items based on your relationship with the man who has been the primary paternal figure in your life (if this person is deceased and there is currently no other paternal figure in your life, check here \_\_\_ and skip to the next questionnaire). Please indicate below about whom you will be responding:

\_\_\_ father \_\_\_ stepfather \_\_\_ grandfather \_\_\_ other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

---

Not at all	A little bit	Moderately	Quite a bit	Very
true of me	true of me	true of me	true of me	true of me
1	2	3	4	5

---

- \_\_\_ 1. I like to show my friends pictures of my father.
- \_\_\_ 2. Sometimes my father is a burden to me.
- \_\_\_ 3. I feel longing if I am away from my father for too long.



- \_\_\_ 4. My ideas regarding racial equality are similar to my father's.
- \_\_\_ 5. My father's wishes have influenced my selection of friends.
- \_\_\_ 6. I feel like I am constantly at war with my father.
- \_\_\_ 7. I blame my father for many of the problems I have.
- \_\_\_ 8. I wish I could trust my father more.
- \_\_\_ 9. My attitudes about obscenity are similar to my father's
- \_\_\_ 10. When I am difficulty I usually call upon my father to help me out of trouble.
- \_\_\_ 11. My father is the most important person in the world to me.
- \_\_\_ 12. I have to be careful not to hurt my father's feelings.
- \_\_\_ 13. I wish that my father lived nearer so I could visit him more frequently.
- \_\_\_ 14. My opinions regarding the role of women are similar to my father's.
- \_\_\_ 15. I often ask my father to assist me in solving personal problems.
- \_\_\_ 16. I sometimes feel like I am being punished by my father.
- \_\_\_ 17. Being away from my father makes me feel lonely.
- \_\_\_ 18. I wish my father wasn't so overprotective.
- \_\_\_ 19. My opinions regarding the role of men are similar to my father's.
- \_\_\_ 20. I wouldn't make a major purchase without my father's approval.
- \_\_\_ 21. I wish my father wouldn't try to manipulate me.
- \_\_\_ 22. I wish my father wouldn't try to make fun of me.
- \_\_\_ 23. I sometimes call home just to hear my father's voice.
- \_\_\_ 24. My religious beliefs are similar to my father's.
- \_\_\_ 25. My father's wishes have influenced my choice of major at school.
- \_\_\_ 26. I feel that I have obligations to my father that I wish I didn't have.
- \_\_\_ 27. My father expects too much from me.
- \_\_\_ 28. I wish I could stop lying to my father.
- \_\_\_ 29. My beliefs regarding how to raise children are similar to my father's.
- \_\_\_ 30. My father helps me to make my budget.
- \_\_\_ 31. While I am at home on a vacation I like to spend most of my time with my father.
- \_\_\_ 32. I often wish that my father would treat me more like an adult.
- \_\_\_ 33. After being with my father for a vacation I find it difficult to leave him.
- \_\_\_ 34. My values regarding honesty are similar to my father's.
- \_\_\_ 35. I generally consult with my father when I make plans for an out of town weekend.
- \_\_\_ 36. I am often angry at my father.
- \_\_\_ 37. I like to hug and kiss my father.
- \_\_\_ 38. I hate it when my father makes suggestions about what I do.
- \_\_\_ 39. My attitudes about solitude are similar to my father's.

- \_\_\_ 40. I consult with my father when deciding about part-time employment.
- \_\_\_ 41. I decide what to do according to whether my father will approve of it.
- \_\_\_ 42. Even when my father has a good idea I refuse to listen to it because she made it.
- \_\_\_ 43. When I do poorly in school, I feel like I am letting my father down.
- \_\_\_ 44. My attitudes regarding environmental protection are similar to my father's.
- \_\_\_ 45. I ask my father what to do when I get into a tough situation.
- \_\_\_ 46. I wish my father wouldn't try to get me to take sides with him.
- \_\_\_ 47. My father is my best friend.
- \_\_\_ 48. I argue with my father over little things.
- \_\_\_ 49. My beliefs about how the world began are similar to my father's.
- \_\_\_ 50. I do what my father decides on most questions that come up.
- \_\_\_ 51. I seem to be closer to my father than most people my age.
- \_\_\_ 52. My father is sometimes a source of embarrassment to me.
- \_\_\_ 53. Sometimes I think I am too dependent on my father .
- \_\_\_ 54. My beliefs about what happens to people when they die are similar to my father's.
- \_\_\_ 55. I ask for my father's advice when I am planning my vacation time.
- \_\_\_ 56. I am sometimes ashamed of my father .
- \_\_\_ 57. I care too much about my father's reactions.
- \_\_\_ 58. I get angry when my father criticizes me.
- \_\_\_ 59. My attitudes regarding sex are similar to my father's.
- \_\_\_ 60. I like to have my father help me pick out the clothing I buy for special occasions.
- \_\_\_ 61. I sometimes feel like an extension of my father.
- \_\_\_ 62. When I don't write my father often enough I feel guilty.
- \_\_\_ 63. I feel uncomfortable keeping things from my father.
- \_\_\_ 64. My attitudes regarding national defense are similar to my father's.
- \_\_\_ 65. I call my father whenever anything goes wrong.
- \_\_\_ 66. I often have to make decisions for my father.
- \_\_\_ 67. I'm not sure I could make it in life without my father.
- \_\_\_ 68. I sometimes resent it when my father tells me what to do.
- \_\_\_ 69. My attitudes regarding mentally ill people are similar to my father's.

# APPENDIX C

## COLLEGE ADJUSTMENT RATING SCALE

Listed below are events or situations that many college students experience as "stressful", or as having a negative impact on their lives. Please examine and select items which you have experienced in the last year. **If you have not experienced an item, leave it blank.** Rate the items you have experienced using a scale from zero to nine indicating the amount of stress you are presently feeling in relation to the item. A value of nine would indicate items offering the most intense stress. A value of one would indicate items offering minimal stress. A value of zero would indicate an item was experienced but no stress is presently felt.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
no stress		some stress			moderate stress			extreme stress	

1. \_\_\_ walking late into class
2. \_\_\_ pressure from peers regarding my dating behavior
3. \_\_\_ personal pressure to get good grades
4. \_\_\_ having an alcoholic parent
5. \_\_\_ skipping class and attending class after skipping
6. \_\_\_ lack of approval from peers
7. \_\_\_ responsibility for unwanted pregnancy
8. \_\_\_ receiving mail, phone calls or visits from family members
9. \_\_\_ failing to complete assignments
10. \_\_\_ death of a friend
11. \_\_\_ difficulty in making vocational selection
12. \_\_\_ health concerns of an immediate family member
13. \_\_\_ receiving a D or F on a test
14. \_\_\_ peer pressure involving sex
15. \_\_\_ conflict with personal sexual morals
16. \_\_\_ lack of mail, phone calls, or visits from family members
17. \_\_\_ taking a test in class
18. \_\_\_ peer pressure involving drugs or alcohol
19. \_\_\_ conflict with religious values

20. \_\_\_ verbal abuse by family members
  21. \_\_\_ studying for a test
  22. \_\_\_ becoming a member of a campus organization or fraternity/sorority
  23. \_\_\_ fear of pregnancy
  24. \_\_\_ pressure from family regarding marriage
  25. \_\_\_ taking notes during a lecture
  26. \_\_\_ concern over problems with friends
  27. \_\_\_ difficulty in budgeting money
  28. \_\_\_ feeling homesick
  29. \_\_\_ seeking assistance from one of my instructors
  30. \_\_\_ meeting new people
  31. \_\_\_ disliking personal appearance
  32. \_\_\_ parents fighting
  33. \_\_\_ receiving a graded test back in class
  34. \_\_\_ getting along with roommate
  35. \_\_\_ lack of assertiveness or ability to speak up for what I believe
  36. \_\_\_ parental separation/divorce
  37. \_\_\_ pressure to get an A or B in a course
  38. \_\_\_ socializing with members of the same sex
  39. \_\_\_ lack of ability to make decisions
  40. \_\_\_ death of a parent
  41. \_\_\_ giving a class presentation
  42. \_\_\_ socializing with members of the opposite sex
  43. \_\_\_ personal shyness
  44. \_\_\_ death of a brother or sister
  45. \_\_\_ completing a research paper
  46. \_\_\_ peer pressure against getting good grades
  47. \_\_\_ fear of failure
  48. \_\_\_ death of a relative
- (check one or more) spouse \_\_\_ uncle \_\_\_ aunt \_\_\_ cousin \_\_\_ grandparent \_\_\_ other \_\_\_
49. \_\_\_ conflict with my instructor(s)
  50. \_\_\_ maintaining friendships
  51. \_\_\_ difficulty in accepting homosexuality of peers
  52. \_\_\_ rivalry with a brother or sister
  53. \_\_\_ being suspended or placed on academic probation
  54. \_\_\_ lack of social activities



55. \_\_\_ fear of personal harm
56. \_\_\_ criticism of my social life from parents
57. \_\_\_ visiting or using the library
58. \_\_\_ being alone when others are socializing
59. \_\_\_ difficulty with personal sexuality
60. \_\_\_ conflicts between parental goals/values or morals and my own
61. \_\_\_ experiencing confusion about my selected major/minor
62. \_\_\_ feeling of discrimination because of my race, sex, or religion
63. \_\_\_ concern over my physical health
64. \_\_\_ going home for visits or vacation
65. \_\_\_ being called on in class
66. \_\_\_ peer pressure to marry/to become engaged to marry
67. \_\_\_ lack of self-motivation
68. \_\_\_ difficulty with my own changing attitudes toward family and hometown
69. \_\_\_ requesting help from a tutor or other support personnel
70. \_\_\_ conflict with campus rules
71. \_\_\_ lack of self-confidence
72. \_\_\_ incestual relationship (any sexual contact between family members)
73. \_\_\_ working while going to school
74. \_\_\_ living in campus housing
75. \_\_\_ Fear of being alone
76. \_\_\_ gain of a new family member
77. \_\_\_ completing reading or written assignments
78. \_\_\_ registering a complaint with a Resident Assistant
79. \_\_\_ my own use of alcohol or drugs
80. \_\_\_ fear of failure to meet family expectations
81. \_\_\_ difficulty motivating myself for classwork
82. \_\_\_ conflict with Resident Assistant
83. \_\_\_ feelings of anxiousness or general tension
84. \_\_\_ physical abuse by family members
85. \_\_\_ falling behind in class(es) because of illness
86. \_\_\_ competing on an athletic team
87. \_\_\_ feeling depressed
88. \_\_\_ concern over personal problems of family member(s)
89. \_\_\_ cheating on a test
90. \_\_\_ visiting bar or club with friends

- 91. \_\_\_\_ contemplation of suicide
- 92. \_\_\_\_ illness in my own children
- 93. \_\_\_\_ falling asleep during class
- 94. \_\_\_\_ having something stolen
- 95. \_\_\_\_ change in personal habits (sleeping, eating, etc.)
- 96. \_\_\_\_ my own marital difficulties
- 97. \_\_\_\_ dropping/adding a course
- 98. \_\_\_\_ pressure from upperclasspersons
- 99. \_\_\_\_ difficulty in resolving past military experience
- 100. \_\_\_\_ making child care arrangements for my children
- 101. \_\_\_\_ other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- 102. \_\_\_\_ other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- 103. \_\_\_\_ other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX D

### ROSENBERG SELF-ESTEEM SCALE

Please read the following statements and circle the response that best applies to you.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others.	1	2	3	4
2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	1	2	3	4
3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.	1	2	3	4
4. I am able to do things as well as most people.	1	2	3	4
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	1	2	3	4
6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.	1	2	3	4
7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	1	2	3	4
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.	1	2	3	4
9. I certainly feel useless at times.	1	2	3	4
10. At times I think I am no good at all.	1	2	3	4

APPENDIX E  
DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Background Information

1. General Information

- a. Age \_\_\_\_ Sex \_\_\_\_ Class (check one): Freshman \_\_\_\_ Junior \_\_\_\_
- b. Religion \_\_\_\_\_ Racial/ethnic background \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Political orientation \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Residence (check one):  
on-campus \_\_\_\_ off-campus with family \_\_\_\_ off-campus with roommates or alone \_\_\_\_

2. Academic Information

- a. Grade point average \_\_\_\_ Major \_\_\_\_\_
- b. When did you declare your major? \_\_\_\_\_
- c. How many majors have you had? \_\_\_\_\_
- d. How many semesters have you been at the University? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Financial Obligations

- a. Are you working while in school? \_\_\_\_  
If so, how many hours per week? \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Do you contribute to your family's income? \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Are you putting yourself through college? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Family background

- a. Are your parents (check one or more): married \_\_\_\_ separated \_\_\_\_  
divorced \_\_\_\_ mother deceased \_\_\_\_ father deceased \_\_\_\_  
other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_?
- b. How old were you when your parent(s) divorced, separated or died?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- c. If your parents are divorced, separated or deceased, please describe your family situation. (include parents' remarriages, with whom you lived, etc.)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

d. Number of brothers \_\_\_\_ Please list their ages \_\_\_\_  
Number of sisters \_\_\_\_ Please list their ages \_\_\_\_

e. Please list your parents' (stepparents') occupations and education:

	Occupation	Highest level of education
Mother	_____	_____
Father	_____	_____
Stepmother	_____	_____
Stepfather	_____	_____

f. Are you the first member of your immediate family to go to college?

yes \_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_

Contact With Family

a. How many times per month do you talk to your parents on the telephone?

\_\_\_\_\_

b. How many times per semester do you visit your family? \_\_\_\_\_

c. Traveling time between UMass and your family's home (check one):

30 mins or less \_\_\_\_ 30 mins to 1 hour \_\_\_\_ 1-2 hours \_\_\_\_ 2-3 hours \_\_\_\_

3-4 hours \_\_\_\_ 4 hours or more \_\_\_\_

d. When was the last time you were home? \_\_\_\_\_

What was it like for you?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



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